Conveyance team of large marble stone stops over at Thigon bus terminal

MANDALAY, 2 Jan—A convoy transporting the large marble stone to be carved as Maha Thakyanrathimi Buddha Image left Saga-in toll gate at 8.10 am on Friday and arrived in Thigon bus terminal in Meiktila Township.

Along Yangon-Mandalay expressway, Chief Engineer U Shwe Mann of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw delivered a speech at the rally of over five thousand farmers from Taninthayi Region in Meiktila. Thura U Shwe Mann arrived at Thigon terminal on 3 January.—MNA

Large marble stone for Maha Thakyanrathimi Buddha Image being conveyed on Yangon-Mandalay expressway.—MNA

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker delivers speech at farmers’ rally in Dawei

DAWEI, 2 Jan—Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann delivered a speech at the rally of over five thousand farmers from Taninthayi Region in Dawei on Friday morning.

In his speech, Thura U Shwe Mann said that today’s meeting is more distinctive than other rallies in other regions and states because motions put forward at the meeting are serious, adding that Myanmar can enjoy more democratic and human rights today than during the past fifty years and those rights were effectively applied at the meeting.

According to the speaker, motions covered promotion of farmers’ lives, development of agriculture sector, promotion of fishermen’s lives, conservation of water resources, settlement of land disputes in accordance with the law and review of law for protection and promotion of farmers’ interests.

Thura U Shwe Mann pointed out that only when promotion of farmers’ live and agricultural development have been realized, will Myanmar be able to

(See page 3)

An interview on Myanmar’s human rights situations approved at 69th Plenary Session of UN General Assembly

NAY PYI TAW, 2 Jan—The Third Committee Session of the 69th United Nations General Assembly made a draft resolution with remarks about the situation of human rights in Myanmar on 29 December last year.

In an interview, U Htin Lynn, acting director-general at the International Organizations and Economic Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the Myanmar News Agency (MNA) that the UN statement recognizes the constructive progress Myanmar has made in its political and economical reforms, democratic transition, national reconciliation, promotion and protection of human rights.

It also welcomes the government’s engagement with parliament, political parties and civil society, recognizing its efforts to review and reform legislation, to release prisoners of conscience, and to secure a nationwide ceasefire with ethnic armed groups alongside an all-inclusive political dialogue with the aim of achieving lasting peace.

The remarks praise Myanmar for its establishment of the Centre for Diversity and National Harmony, as well as for its engagement and cooperation with international organizations including the United Nations.

According to reports, the initial draft resolution had been submitted by the European Union to the Third Committee Session on 28 November 2014, with the 69th UN General Assembly session making a draft resolution with some remarks.

Myanmar did not call for a vote on the draft resolution, which the country said welcomes its achievements, taking into consideration the existing bilateral constructive cooperation. A consensus has been reached between Myanmar and the EU through earnest negotiations.

When asked about an urge to end racial and religious discrimination, U Htin Lynn said that certain data are found to be false accusations, which he added could fan hatred among the communities that have resided in unity and harmony for centuries of years in the country. The acting director-general denied the accusations, saying and there is no such thing.

(See page 2)

Police arrested 245 traffickers in 2014, most in Shan State

YANGON, 2 Jan—Figures of human trafficking incidents in 2014 exceed the previous year’s total of 102 nationwide, with most of the cases coming from Shan State, according to the statistics of Myanmar’s Anti-Human Trafficking Police Force.

The numbers of human trafficking cases between January and December reached 124 and Shan State tops the chart with 56 cases, followed by Yangon with 14 cases and Mandalay with 10 cases.

Bagu, Sagaing, Taninthayi, Magway and Ayeyawady regions and Rakhine, Mon, Kachin and Kayin states had fewer than 10 cases; the capital Nay Pyi Taw had three.

Most victims were sold as fraudulent marriage partners and forced labourers in neighbouring countries, especially in China, but there is only one forced adoption case this year. The police exposed 26 human trafficking cases reported in the country where majority of women were put into prostitution.

In 2014, authorities rescued 241 victims—99

(See page 3)
AMYOTHA HLUTTAW speaker tours Rakhine State

AMYOTHA HLUTTAW Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint, together with Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Maung Maung Ohn and the chairman and members of Amyotha Hluttaw Relief and Care Provision Committee, presented cash and exercise books for monasteries, monastic education schools and educational foundations in Yathedaung, Sittway, MraukU, Kyauktaw and Thandwe in Rakhine State on 30 and 31 December.

The speaker and the committee donated K 20 million and 72 solar lamps worth K 3.6 million for villages flooded by salt water in Yathedaung, K 6 million and 600 dozens of exercise books for monastic education schools in Sittway, K 10 million for the maintenance of Ngakhutauk monastery, K 10 million for ordination of 500 new monks in Maungtaw, K 5 million for the abhor training school and 18,957 blankets those in need in Sittway.

On 31 December, U Khin Aung Myint and party left for MraukU and U Khin Aung Myint and party left for MraukU and paid homage to Shitthaung party left for MraukU and MraukU and presented bottles of soft drinks and purified drinking water, cakes, coffee mix sachets and candy packets to members of MWAF and Maternal and Child Welfare Association who are participating in the State flag hoisting ceremony of 67th Anniversary Independence Day and the Grand Military Review, at the guest house of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee, on 1 January. Patrons of MWAF Daw Ni Ni Win and Daw Mya Theingi, vice president Daw Tin Tin Latt and officials were in attendance.—MNA

WAOs present soft drink, purified drinking water, snacks to MWAF, MCWA members

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MRTV, Myanmar Radio to broadcast live flag hoisting ceremony, grand military review ceremony

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Companies home and abroad get licences for microfinance industries

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AMYOTHA HLUTTAW Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint attends presentation of blankets for monastic education school in Thandwe.—MNA

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker delivers speech...

(from page 1)

struggle out of poverty and become a developed nation, saying that about 90 percent of development needs for farmers and fishermen will be able to fulfilled when the law for protection and promotion of farmers’ interests comes into effect after enacting rules and regulations for the law.

The union government has formed a central body composed of union ministers and led by a vice president to enable farmers to enjoy their rights in accordance the law and is exerting efforts for development in agriculture as well as other sectors, according to the speaker.

More development funds have been made available for promotion of farmers’ lives as well as for transportation, electricity supply and communication while efforts are being exerted to pave way for investment in industrial sector in addition to previously prioritized trade, agriculture and fishery sectors, he continued.

Ethnics in Shan State peacefully stage protests

NAV PYI TAW, 2 Jan—A total of 1,070 Shan ethnics led by Sai Kyaw Nyunt peacefully staged a protest in Hsipaw Township, Kyaukme District, about 2,000 local Pa-O ethnics led by U Khun Tin Htu in Taunggyi and about 1,100 Palang ethnics led by U Ba Thaung in Namhsam, southern Shan State on 24 December.

Local people will be enjoy more opportunities when Dawei Special Economic Zone and Deep Sea Port projects have been implemented and they are required to prepare for human resources development so that they can participate in the projects, the speaker said.

The rule of law is essential for regional development and it is necessary for all to follow laws, rules and regulations, the speaker urged, saying that the government, organizations concerned and the people are required to make concerted efforts for the rule of law.

In conclusion, Thura U Shwe Mann said that cooperation among the region government, the region Hluttaw and local people will result in development of the region as well as of the country.

After the rally, the speaker cordially greeted the participant farmers and viewed round an exhibition of agricultural machinery and products displayed at the rally.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Serbian ambassador

Senior
General
Min
Aung
Hlaing
cordially shakes hands with Ambassador of Serbia to Myanmar Mr Miodrag Nikolin.

MNA

Nav Pyi Taw, 2 Jan—Armed forces of Myanmar and Serbia have shared a long friendly relations for 65 years and being close friendly nations, the friendship will strengthen in the future, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing told Ambassador of Serbia to Myanmar Mr Miodrag Nikolin at Bayintnaung Guest House in Nav Pyi Taw on Friday.

The senior general also thanked the ambassador for assistance of Serbia during the independence struggle of Myanmar, saying that there are prospects for economic cooperation with Serbia as it possesses high technology.

Then, the senior general wished Serbia higher development in the new year. The Serbian ambassador said that the two countries have been able to maintain friendly relations in military and economic sectors, adding that his country is willing to cooperate in various sectors and supports Myanmar’s reform in economic, political and social sectors, and peace and national reconciliation process.

Also present at the call were senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief.

After the meeting, the senior general and the ambassador posed for a documentary photo.

Serbia is one of the six countries separated from Yugoslavia and it succeed to Yugoslavia. After establishing diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Yugoslavia on 29 December 1950, the two countries have opened embassies in the capitals and cooperated in the manufacturing of locomotive engines and some weapons, shipbuilding and irrigation.

Local people supported the discussions on nationwide ceasefire process presented by U Aye Myint Kyaw, regional development by U Thet Tin, national race affairs by U Saw Nyunt and constitutional amendment by U Sai Lu.

On 27 December, over 1,700 Kokang ethnics led by U Aung Naing (a) At Chan peacefully made a procession of protest in Ward 2 of Laukkai Township in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, holding placards of six demands in Myanmar and Kokang languages. Under the permission of the authorities, they expressed their sentiments to rapidly carry out internal peace-making process till achieving success, to underwrite development tasks of the nation and reform process as quickly as possible, to fulfill the rights and demands of ethnics, to create opportunities for all ethnics to participate in constitutional amendment on a wider scale without a six-party talks and to soonest implement the demands.

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Basic education schools commission new buildings into service in Lewe Tsp

**LEWE, 2 Jan** — A ceremony to put new school buildings into service was held at Basic Education Middle School Branch in Lewe Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 31 December. The Education Ministry allotted the fund for construction of school buildings in 2014-15 fiscal year. Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Phone Zaw Han and officials formally opened the school buildings. U Win Aung of San Phwint Phyo Company that constructed the buildings handed over documents to Township Education Officer Daw Than Than Nwe. The company constructed one 60x30 feet steel structure two-storey building at Shachaung BEPS and one 80x30 feet RC building at Htein-in Branch, one 60x30 feet RC building at Hezin-in BEPS and one 80x30 feet RC building at Shuchuang BEMS Branch.

Ko Ko Yupa (Nay Pyi Taw)

**Basic tour guide course kicks off in Nyaungshwe**

**NYAUNGSHWE, 2 Jan** — The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and Shan State Government jointly conducted basic tour guide course at the office of Intha literature and regional development association in Nyaungshwe, Shan State, on 29 December.

Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Tin Shwe, Intha National Race Affairs Minister U Win Myint of the state and Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Win Swe made speeches.

An official of the ministry said Inlay region is one of the tourist destinations. The training course was aimed at creating job opportunities for local youths and developing the human resources. Altogether 120 trainees from Nyaungshwe, Taunggyi, Kalay and Hopong townships are attending the four-week course.

Nay Myo Thu rein

**Agreement reached to spend K100 million fund on development tasks**

**NYAUNGLEBIN, 2 Jan** — A coordination meeting on spending K100 million for development tasks allotted by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was held at the hall of Nyaunglebin Township General Administration Department in Bago Region on 31 December.

Township Administrator U Thein Zaw Kan made a speech. Chairman of Township Development Supportive Committee U Thein Naing explained implementation of development tasks spending the fund in 2014-15 fiscal year. Departmental officials and ward and village authorities discussed requirements in their respective sectors.

Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)

**High Tech donates education fund, vehicles, generator to Kayah State**

**LOIKAW, 2 Jan** — High Tech Concrete Technology Co Ltd donated vehicles and a generator to Kayah State government at the latter’s office in Loikaw, Kayah State, on 1 January.

Manager of Biluchang No 3 power station U Myo Htut explained the purpose of donation.

Officials presented K10 million for students with disabilities to officials, three trash vans to Kayah State Development Affairs Committee and one 93KV generator to Kayah State government office. Kayah State Minister for Bamar national race affairs U Sein Oo spoke words of thanks.

Chief Minister of the state U Khin Maung Oo and officials viewed the generator and vehicles. The well-wishers’s donations amounted to K50 million.

Kayah State IPRD
Search teams battle rough weather in hunt for AirAsia wreck

Indian divers prepare their gear on the deck of SAR ship Puvoroj during a search operation for passengers onboard AirAsia Flight QZ8501, in Java Sea, Indonesia on 2 Jan, 2015. — Reuters

Debris such as luggage, an emergency slide and a life jacket has also been found. The bodies are being taken in numbered coffins to Surabaya, where relatives of the victims, most of whom were Indonesian, have gathered. Authorities have been collecting DNA from relatives to help identify the bodies. The first funeral of one of the crash victims was held on Thursday, and on Friday officials said the remains of three more had been identified, including a flight attendant. The plane was travelling at 32,000 ft (9,753 metres) and the pilots had asked to climb to 38,000 ft to avoid bad weather just before contact was lost. When air traffic controllers granted permission to fly at 38,000 ft a few minutes later, they got no response. A source close to the investigation said radar data appeared to show the aircraft made an “unbelievably” steep climb before it crashed, leaving investigators to ponder what might have pushed it beyond the A320’s limits. “It appears to be beyond the performance envelope of the aircraft,” he said. Online discussions among pilots has centred on unconfirmed secondary radar data which suggested the aircraft was climbing at a speed of 353 knots, about 100 knots too slow, and that it might have stalled. The Indonesian captain, a former air force fighter pilot, had 6,100 flying hours on the A320 and the plane last underwent maintenance in mid-November, according to Indonesia AirAsia, which is 49 percent owned by Malaysia-based AirAsia X Plc.

Three airline disasters involving Malaysian-affiliated carriers in less than a year have dented confidence in the country’s aviation industry and spooked travellers. Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 disappeared in July on its route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 passengers and crew and has not been found. On 17 July there was a fire on the airline’s flight MH17 was downed shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board. On 29 December Flight QZ8501 were 155 Indonesians, three South Koreans, and one person each from Singapore, Malaysia and Britain. The co-pilot was French.—Reuters

India PM replaces Soviet-style planning body, aiming to boost growth

New Delhi, 2 Jan — India has scrapped its 65-year-old Planning Commission, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accused of stifling growth with Soviet-style bureaucracy, replacing it on Thursday. A body he said would do more to involve the regions.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

The new National In- stitution for Transforming India (NITI) will act more like a think tank or forum, say its supporters, in contrast with the Commission which imposed five-year-plans and allocated resources to hit set economic targets. Despite being widely blamed for the slow growth that long plagued India, the Commission survived the market reforms of the early 1990s, riling Modi with its interventions when he was prime minister of the fast-growing state of Gujarat.

In a series of messages to his 9.1 million followers on Twitter, Modi said the body would replace the old one-size-fits-all approach with a “pro-people, pro-active & participative development agenda”.

Modi, elected by a land- slide last year on a promise to revive flagging growth and create jobs, had vowed to do away with the Planning Commission that was set up in 1950 by India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. But his plans were criticized by the opposition Congress party, which wants to defend Nehru’s legacy and reverse the policy version does.

Despite winning the biggest landslide victory in three decades last May, Modi lacks a majority in the upper house of Parliament, which is now led by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who he said seeks reconciliation and effective discussion, among the royalists

Peninsula issues should be resolved through dialogue

Seoul, 2 Jan — South Korea has stuck to a position that all issues with the Democratic People’s Re- public of Korea ( DPRK) should be resolved through cooperation and dialogue, Seoul’s Unification Minis- try spokesman Lim Byeong- cheol said on Friday.

“The government of DPRK should come to the dialogue table without any preconditions if it has a sincere will to improve rela- tions,” the spokesman told a Press briefing.

Lim’s remarks came following DPRK’s top leader Kim Jong Un said in his New Year address on Thursday that “there is no reason not to hold the high- est-level talks” with South Korea “if atmosphere and environment are created.”

The DPRK leader said no hopeful dialogue would be held in an environment where war rehearsals are being conducted, calling for the stop of annual mil- itary exercises jointly con- ducted by South Korea and the United States.

Commenting on the remarks, Lim said South Korea would respond to the DPRK’s “unilateral” call for the stop of the joint ex- ercise “based on principle.”

Lim said South Korea would hold a dialogue with the DPRK “ irrespective of dialogue form” for frank and effective discussion, noting that Seoul is open to all forms of dialogue to discuss issues of mutual concern. — Kyodo News

Cambodia’s Prince Ranariddh to return as president of his old party

Phnom Penh, 2 Jan — Prince Norodom Ranariddh decided to return as president of the royalist party he led to victory in Cambodia’s first democratic election in 1993 but which has dramatically lost popularity since then, party sources said on Friday. In a letter dated on Thursday, Prince Ranariddh said, “I have a great honour and delight to accept to be a president of FUNCINPEC... to continue to lead our party again.” FUNCINPEC Secretary General Bunchhay told Kyodo News on Friday he is holding talks with all people concerned to set a date for a party congress to nominate Prince Ranariddh as president of the party, which is now led by Princess Bokorpsamy.

He revealed that the deal was actually brokered by Prime Minister Hun Sen, who he said seeks reconciliation among the royalists currently split into two rival parties, neither of which has any seats in the National As- sembly. — Kyodo News
Pakistan, US to hold strategic dialogue this month

ISLAMABAD, 2 Jan — Pakistan and the United States would hold a strate-
gic dialogue in Islamabad this month, the Foreign
Ministry said on Thursday. Spokeswoman Tasnim
Aslam said US Secretary of State John Kerry would
visit Pakistan for the minis-
terial dialogue.
She said arrangements for the strategic dialogue, including visit dates, were
being finalized.
The last session of the dialogue was held in Wash-
ington in January 2014.
The Strategic Dia-
louge focuses mainly on
energy, security, strategic
stability, nonproliferation,
counterterrorism, economy,
law enforcement and de-
defence-related issues.
Talks have taken place in
both countries since the
dialogue was initiated in
2010. But after 2011, a succession of events and
interrupted the pro-
cess.
Pakistani officials said the resumption of the dia-
logue last year after a hiatus of three years was seen as
an improvement in bilater-
al relationship after Prime
Minister Nawaz Sharif as-
sumed office in June last
year.
Brazilians Rousseff vows budget cuts, anti-corruption push in second term

BRASILIA, 2 Jan — Brazil’s President Dilma
Rousseff began her second
term on Thursday, promising
to push ahead with
budget cuts and an anti-
corruption crusade.
Rousseff was one of three
leaders seen as 
leftist, pledged to pursue
a domestic marketplace in-
creasingly accustomed to
government largesse.
“It’s going to be a
very rough year for her,”
said former Congressmen
Alfredo Sirkis, a long-time
critic of the left to Rousse-
ff, citing an “explosive combination” of problems.
Things will become
even more complicated for
Rousseff in February when
the Supreme Court is ex-
pected to reveal the names of
dozens of politicians who
allegedly received
funds from more than
$3 billion in kickbacks
skimmed from the coffers
of Petrobras.
So far 39 people have
been arrested in the scan-
dl, including two former
Petrobras directors and
scores of executives from
Brazil’s top construction
companies.
The execu-
tives are likely to
complicate what is expected to be an
other tough year for Bra-
zil’s economy, given
sluggish
growth worldwide and
a domestic marketplace in-
creasingly accustomed to
government largesse.
“The road to
recovery is going to be
slow,” said a former
Congressman
in Brasilia, Rousse-
ff also promised to
embark on an anti-corruption
initiative, saying she had
promised to widen belt-tightening in a way that
minimizes the pain
for average Brazilians who
rely on the government for
social welfare benefits.
A career bureaucrat
who had never run for
public office before becoming
the first woman to ascend
to Brazil’s presidency in
2011, Rousseff spent the
last four years juggling
an economic downturn
and high inflation. She
was narrowly re-elected
in October after a divisive campaign that
touted her record at reducing pover-
ty and keeping unemploy-
ment near all-time lows.
“More than anybody, I
know Brazil needs to
resume growth. The first
steps of this journey are
an overhaul of public ac-
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tic savings, beefing up in-
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productivity,” Rousseff
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Rousseff didn’t pro-
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A career bureaucrat
who had never run for
public office before becoming
the first woman to ascend
to Brazil’s presidency in
2011, Rousseff spent the
last four years juggling
an economic downturn
and high inflation. She
was narrowly re-elected
in October after a divisive campaign that
touted her record at reducing pover-
ty and keeping unemploy-
ment near all-time lows.
“More than anybody, I
know Brazil needs to
resume growth. The first
steps of this journey are
an overhaul of public ac-
counts, increasing domes-
tic savings, beefing up in-
vestments and improving
productivity,” Rousseff
said in her inaugural ad-
dress to Congress.
Rousseff didn’t pro-
specify on the budget cuts, though she did
promise to undertake the
belt-tightening in a way
that minimizes the pain
for average Brazilians who
rely on the government for
social welfare benefits.
Ukraine says rebels keep up attacks into New Year

Kiev, 2 Jan — Ukrainian separatists carried out sporadic attacks on government forces as the New Year began, wounding three soldiers, the Kiev military said, as President Petro Poroshenko told the nation to brace for a year that would “not be easy.”

The military said rebels had carried out several mortar and small arms attacks on Ukrainian positions in the east. Local authorities in Luhansk region, bordering Russia, said they had destroyed two homes in a village on Thursday, killing one civilian.

There was no confirmation of these reports from the rebels.

“New Year’s night in the zone of the anti-terrorist operation was not a quiet one,” a statement by the military said.

“Over the past 24 hours three Ukrainian soldiers were wounded as a result of shelling,” military spokesman Andriy Lysenko told journalists.

More than 4,700 people were killed in 2014 in eastern Ukraine in a conflict pitting separatists against government forces loyal to Kiev’s pro-Western government.

The fighting has provoked the worst crisis in relations between Russia and the West since the Cold War.

Ukrainian authorities and separatists have exchanged hundreds of prisoners of war as part of a 12-point plan to end the conflict. In a fresh diplomatic attempt to restore peace, Poroshenko is preparing to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and the leaders of France and Germany on 15 January in Kazakhstan.

The overnight New Year attacks underlined the fragility of a ceasefire that has theoretically been in place since early in September, though frequently violated.

Poroshenko, who has acknowledged that Kiev lacks the military means to take back lost territory by force, told Ukrainians on Thursday that they had endured the worst year since the end of World War Two in 1945.

“An angry enemy encroached on our lives, our territory, our freedom and our independence,” he said in a New Year’s message on the presidential website. Rae Peter 2015 would “not be easy”, he said he expected it to go down in history as the year when Ukrainians would enact deep-seated reforms opening up the road to membership of the European Union.

The commitment of Kiev’s new leadership to European integration following the overthrow of a Moscow-backed president last February has set it at variance with Russia, Ukraine’s former Soviet overlord, which wants to keep it within its political and economic orbit.

Vienna, 2 Jan — During its chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2015, Serbia’s experience and position can be very important in resolving the Ukrainian crisis, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz has said.

He told Tanjug that Serbia under Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic had been contributing to resolving old conflicts in the Balkans for a while.

Serbia has been contributing to resolving old conflicts in the Western Balkans for a few years now. Serbia’s being selected to hold the OSCE chairmanship should be viewed from the perspective of the constructive role the country has played under Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic and Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic. I am confident that Serbia will demonstrate this constructive role while holding the OSCE chairmanship as well, said Kurz.

The ongoing year was especially challenging for the OSCE primarily due to the grave crisis in Ukraine, and the organization proved its role as central forum for crisis management here. The crisis will certainly dominate over other issues during Serbia’s chairmanship as well, believes Kurz.

The Austrian foreign minister believes that Serbia’s historical experience and its position on international forums could prove very valuable in resolving conflicts.

Austria views Serbia’s foreign policy objectives include that, he said, adding that Austria and Serbia had already been actively cooperating in the OSCE framework and Serbia could continue to count on the support of the government in Vienna.

New Year rings in with tightened NYC security, California arrests

New York, 2 Jan — Roughly 1 million revellers rang in the new year at New York’s Times Square under unusually tight security following a weekend that had seen four attacks on the streets, rooftops and in subway stations around Times Square.

New Year’s Eve event that has theoretically been in place since 15 January in Kazakhstan.

A smaller protest with between 200 and 250 people took place in Boston on Wednesday, with claims of people who moved peacefully a “die-in” demonstration at First Night festivities, a yearly New Year’s Eve event that draws hundreds of small children.

Tourism authority demands tougher precaution measures after fatal Shanghai stampede

Shanghai, 2 Jan — Chinese tourist authorities demand tougher precaution measures after a stampede during New Year celebrations killed 36 people. The National Tourism Administration (NTA) asked local tourism authorities to strengthen security measures, improve emergency response plans, and take strict measures to control tourist flows at scenic spots.

Shanghai police said the stampede happened after a crowd of tourists on the Bund, a trendy riverside tourist spot, surged forward as a small girl slipped and fell to the floor. Other people tripped over her and fell on top of her.

Police said there were “a number of factors” that contributed to the stampede, which was the second major accident in Shanghai since 2014.

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Ignorance of Law is no Excuse

By U Mya Thein B.A;B.L.

There is a legal maxim “Ignorance of Law is no Excuse”. All over the world, each and every country has its own legal system. Everyone whether a citizen or a foreigner who is in the particular country should respect and observe the law of that country; Law of the land. After commitment of a crime no one can say I don’t understand the law of the land or I am ignorant of law. Under universal principles of law, it is not acceptable or a reasonable ground to condone the crime committed.

Before getting into one’s country, a foreigner needs to know the custom, belief and law of that country like weather, attire, food or so on. One has to understand what are Dos and Don’ts in that country.

Myanmar is a country of multi-racial and multi-religion but majority profess Buddhist faith. We pay respect to three jewels Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Pagoda, Stupa and Monastery are sacred places. A foreigner should understand the Buddhist belief and culture such as before getting into the sacred place, foot wearing is prohibited including socks. Attire must be acceptable by Buddhists. Wearing shorts are prohibited. Men's should be adaptable with the public.

Section 295 of the Myanmar Penal Code says “Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons, with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both”.

In Myanmar culture it is not polite to show something by pointing out with foot or toe. You cannot hug a Myanmar lady as a sign of friendly nature. You cannot touch the head especially of elders. We pay respect to elders by age or by status. We pay respect to elders. We treat lower part of body as inferior. You cannot wear slippers on it printed National Flag and so on. You cannot print or use National Seal or National Flag without proper authority. You cannot lower down the dignity of National Anthem in any way. You have to observe the National Seal Law, National Flag Law and the National Anthem Law.

You cannot smoke in a public place such as in children's play grounds, stadiums, hospitals, classrooms, departmental stores, elevators, restaurants, public auditoriums etc. It is punishable under the Control of Smoking and Consumption of Tobacco Product Law.

Possession, sale or trafficking of narcotic drugs of any kind is a serious crime in Myanmar. The punishment is up to capital punishment under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

Another serious crime in Myanmar is gambling such as participating near the place of cock fighting in a public place. Playing cards in a place that people can legally arrest is also punishable under the Gambling Law. No need to prove that you are actually playing with cards. Under section 18 of the Gambling Law, if you are caught by the police in the vicinity of the gaming house the court may presume that your presence is to gamble. There is a special rule of evidence that the burden of proof of innocence of the accused is on him. The onus or burden of proof is on him. Once caught it is hard to be released.

In every country all over the world a lot of Acts, Rules and Regulations have to be observed by everyone in the country whether you are local or a foreigner. Even local citizens don’t understand the intricacy of law, how can a foreigner understand all laws of the country but there is a special rule of presumption “Every one understands the law of the country”. Ignorance of law is no excuse.

Krislite donates cash, kind to social organizations

YANGON, 2 Jan—Krislite working in electronic business activities in Myanmar donated cash and kind to social associations as part to its 20th founding anniversary commemoration. During a ceremony to mark its 20th anniversary, the lighting company contributed K 10 million to the funds of Sitagu organization and K 5 million to the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association recently, said an information officer of Krislite.

Besides, also donated street lights worth US$20,000 to Yangon City Development Committee, she added.

Krislite, a total lighting solution provider for the two stadiums in Nay Pyi Taw during the 27th South East Asian Games hosted by Myanmar and for event lighting of the 25th Asean Summit, has also worked in lighting business activities as a design and supply package for government projects such as parliament building and state guest house in Nay Pyi Taw and private projects since its founding in 1994.

Krislite will open its 3rd branch office in Mandalay in the near future, she added.
Natthadaw Dam benefits summer paddy fields

Mandaly, 2 Jan — Maykha Hall Foundation (Mandalay) of Yangon Institute of Economics conducted an educative talk on stock share market and investment opportunities at Hotel Mandalay in Mahaanmye Township, Mandalay, on 1 January. Deputy Director U Thet Tun Oo of Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre (MSEC) gave talks on investment in stock market, profits from the market, preparations for establishment of Stock Market in Myanmar in 2015 and purchase of stock numbers and replied to queries raised by entrepreneurs. It was also attended by executives of Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, entrepreneurs, company managers and guests. Thida Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Village libraries get Sky Net receivers, LED TVs

Yinmabin, 2 Jan — Under the arrangements of alleviation of poverty in rural areas, the meat and fish production and rural development committee of Sagaing Region government provided Sky Net receivers and LED TV at the hall of Basic Education High School in Yinmabin, Sagaing Region, on 30 December.

Head of Township Information and Public Relations Department Daw Soe Soe Win explained the purpose of donations. Officials presented one Sky Net set each to village libraries of Indaw and Sonchaung villages and one LED TV set each to Aungchantha and Pyaunggya villages.

Mandaly, 2 Jan — Mandalay-based gold merchants facing difficulties to export quality gold of Myanmar to the international market hope for assistance of the government, gold merchants in Mandalay told media. Executive U Aung Hsan Win of Aung Thamadi Gold and Jewellery Trading said that although Myanmar’s gold meets the international standard, only when the government provides assistance of necessary technology, will the merchants export gold to the international market. “Gold production and its quality meet international standard. Although local gold merchants have high demand in the domestic market, they have many hurdles to penetrate the international market. For example, we need to produce gold through kilo system. So, we need the machinery to apply kilo system and technology. If we have the opportunity to export gold with the assistance of the government’s assistance, the government will levy more tax,” he continued.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Cooperative society members enjoy new harvest feast

Nay Pyi Taw, 2 Jan — Emerald Green agricultural produce cooperative society in Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, disbursed loans to farmers, breeders, shop owners and odd-job workers at soft interest rate.

Moreover, the society provides paddy transplanting machines and combined harvesters to local farmers. It sells fertilizers and inputs to the farmers at fair prices. So far, the society has been formed with 1,691 members.

The society organized the fourth New Harvest Feast on 31 December evening at Maha Thiri Mingala monastery in Aungchantha Village, Zabuthiri Township, attended by Member of Nay Pyi Taw Council U Myo Nyunt, Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Khin Maung Htay and officials.

The council member prepared a toast at the feast. Chairman of the society U Nwe Oo handed over 351 Buddha images donated by the head of State and family to members of eight branches. —District IPRD

Gold merchants hope for assistance of government to penetrate international market

Meiktila District police force meets media

Meiktila, 2 Jan — Meiktila District police force held a press conference at the police avenue in Nandawgon ward, Meiktila, on 31 January.

Commander of the district police force Police Lt-Col Sao Nay Lin explained that policing tasks are being implemented in line with the present time. District police force has achieved success in cooperation with local people.

In Meiktila, each police discharge duty for over 1,700 people. So, police force needs public participation in policing tasks.

He continued that the district could arrest 52 fugitives of 192 from October to December 2014. Efforts are being made to arrest remaining 135 fugitives.

He explained cooperation with European Union in community policing tasks, narcotic drugs elimination and exposing of criminal cases. The commander replied to queries raised by media persons.

GNLM-018
US, partners hit Islamic State in Syria, Iraq

Baghdad, 2 Jan — Violence in Iraq in 2014 killed at least 12,262 civilians, making it the deadliest year since the sectarian bloodshed of 2006-07, the United Nations said in a statement.

The majority of the deaths — nearly 8,500 — occurred during the second half of the year following the expansion of the Sunni Muslim Islamic State insurgency in June out of Anbar Province leading to widespread clashes with security forces.

"Yet again, the Iraqi ordinary citizen continues to suffer from violence and terrorism... This is a very sad state of affairs," said Nickolay Mladenov, head of the UN political mission in Iraq, in a statement released on Thursday.

Islamic State fighters still control roughly a third of Iraq. The army and Shi'ite and Kurdish militiamen continue to battle the insurgents.

The figures show that violence has not abated since 2013 when 7,818 civilians were killed, the UN said. The bloodshed remains below the levels seen in 2006 and 2007 when sectarian Shi'ite-Sunni killings reached their peak.

In December, the body said that a total of 1,101 Iraqis were killed in acts of violence, including 651 civilians, 29 policemen and a further 421 members of the security forces.

Thousands of combatants have been killed in clashes involving Iraqi army forces, militia, Islamist militants, tribal forces and Kurdish Peshmergas. Fighting in urban areas has taken a particular toll on civilian populations.

The bloodshed was worst in Baghdad in December, where 320 civilians were killed, followed by Anbar province to the west with 164 dead.—Reuters

Syria’s Assad shown hugging troops in embattled Damascus district

Beirut, 2 Jan — Syrian President Bashar al-Assadvisited a district on the outskirts of Damascus and thanked soldiers fighting “in the face of terrorism”, his office said on Twitter late on Wednesday, posting pictures of the rare trip.

Syrian television on Thursday aired footage of the New Year visit, accompanying it with patriotic music. It showed Assad talking to troops, embracing them and sharing a meal outside, in what was presented as a morale boost for soldiers on the frontline of the country’s civil war.

The conflict killed and Kurdish militiamen continue to battle the insurgents.

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Libya sees more progress in extinguishing fire at eastern oil terminal

Tripoli, 2 Jan — Libya has made more progress in extinguishing a fire at oil storage tanks at the country’s biggest oil port, Es Sider, that has been raging for one week, a member of a firefighting crew said on Thursday.

Es Sider and its adjacent Ras Lanuf terminal have been closed since a group allied to a rival government in Tripoli moved three weeks ago to try and take them, part of a struggle between former rebels who helped topple Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 but are now fighting for power and a share of oil reserves.

A week ago, a rocket hit Es Sider’s storage facilities, destroying up to 1.8 million barrels of crude and at least two tanks, a top official has said.

“We’ve managed to extinguish all but one tank storage,” said a firefighting official. “Tomorrow we hope to finish the job.”

The battle for control of the oil ports is part of a wider struggle in the North African country which has had two governments since a group called Libya Dawn seized the capital in August by expelling a rival faction, installing its own prime minister and forcing the recognized premier, Abdullah al-Thinni, to operate out of the east with the elected House of Representatives.

The fighting has reduced Libya’s crude output to around 380,000 barrels a day, state-run National Oil Corp (NOC) has said.

Es Sider is fed from fields run by Waha Oil Co., a joint-venture of NOC with US firms Hess, Marathon and ConocoPhillips. Thinni’s government had said this week it had contracted a US firefighting firm for six million dollars. It was not clear whether it has arrived yet.— Reuters

Displaced Iraqi people from the majority Yazidi sect, fleeing violence in the Iraqi town of Sinjar west of Mosul, walk at the Qaida camp on the outskirts of Dohuk Province on 7 Dec, 2014. — Reuters

2014 deadliest year in Iraq for civilians since 2006-7 bloodshed — UN

_Reuters_
China’s Huawei 2014 smartphone sales rise by a third

BEIJING, 2 Jan — Huawei Technology Co Ltd’s [HWT.UL] smartphone sales rose by almost a third to $11.8 billion in 2014, according to an internal memo seen by Reuters, showing the Chinese telecoms firm’s continued ascent in the global handset wars.

The division shipped about 75 million smartphones in 2014, according to the year-end memo to employees sent by Richard Yu, the head of Huawei’s consumer business. Although that represented a more than 40 percent year-on-year increase, the figure

Indonesian frog is one of a kind — and not because of its fangs

The newly described frog L. Larvaeansus, male (L) and female, are pictured from the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, in this undated handout photo provided by Jim McGuire.—

WASHINGTON, 2 Jan — Its fangs are not what makes the newly identified Indonesian frog species Limnonectes larvaeansus unique on Earth. The way it makes babies does.

This little amphibian from the rain forests of Indonesia’s island of Sulawesi is the only one of the world’s 6,455 frog species to give birth to tadpoles, eschewing the common froggy practice of laying eggs, scientists said on Wednesday.

“Reproduction in most frogs could not be more different from human reproduction. In this case, what is most interesting, ironical-ly, is that the reproductive mode is more similar to our own,” said herpetologist Jimmy McGuire of the University of California, Berkeley, whose research appears in the scientific journal PLOS ONE.

This frog, usually gray or brown, measures about 1-1/2 inches long (40 mm), weighs less than one-twentieth of an adult (2.5 grams) and belongs to the Asian group of fanged frogs. Males possess two fang-like projections from the lower jaw that are used in fighting. The frog lives along small streams and puddles in rainforest habitats, doing its best to avoid being eaten by larger fanged frog species as well as snakes and frog-munching birds.

Its mode of reproduction sets this frog apart.

“The vast, vast majority of frogs have external fertilization. For mating, the male grips the female around the waist and releases sperm as she releases her eggs,” McGuire said.

Those eggs mature through stages including the aquatic tadpole larval stage, typically limbless with a tail that propels it through the water.

About a dozen frog species rely on internal fertilization, McGuire said. All but the newly identified one either deposit fertilized eggs or give birth to froglets, essentially miniature versions of an adult that already passed through a modified tadpole stage while still in an egg capsule inside the female. The female Limnonectes larvaeansus (meaning “marsh swimmer that gives birth to larvae”) instead gives birth to tadpoles.

“It’s totally unclear why this mode of reproduction has not evolved more frequently,” McGuire said.

“My favourite topic when it comes to frog evolution and diversification is the bewildering variation in reproductive modes that occur. Frogs exhibit all sorts of interesting twists.”

There have been frogs that swallowed their eggs and brood-ed them in the stomach, a species in which the male broods the eggs in his vocal sac, and many species that carry eggs and tadpoles in pouches on their backs and sides, he said.—Reuters

Samsung Electronics says new smart TVs in 2015 to run Tizen platform

SEOUL, 2 Jan — Samsung Electronics Co Ltd said on Thursday that all its new smart television products launched in 2015 will be powered by the Tizen operating system, marking a fresh effort by the company to increase the usage of the software platform.

Smart TVs offer additional software and connectivity functions, such as video streaming and web browsing capabilities. Samsung demonstrated TV sets powered by Tizen at developer conferences last year.

“We are focusing our efforts on Tizen right now,” Kim Hyun-suk, Samsung’s president of visual display business, told Reuters in an interview. “We hope that other TV makers will also use it and help build an ecosystem that will help the platform grow.”

Televisions will be an additional mode to the stable of Tizen products, which consists of a few smart watches and cameras despite years of development and support by the world’s top maker of smartphones and TVs. The platform represents the most visible effort

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Australia issues warning over deadly crocodiles

SYDNEY, 2 Jan — Residents and tourists in northern Australia are being warned about a growing number of crocodiles that are extra dangerous in the breeding season.

Authorities are especially concerned after four people were killed in crocodile attacks in 2014, the highest on record.

The Northern Territory Parks Wildlife Operations (PWCNT) unit said it had received numerous calls regarding sightings of large crocodiles in the Katherine River, a popular area with tourists and bushwalkers.

“The wet season is breeding time for the estuarine or saltwater crocodile,” NT Parks and Wildlife said in a statement.

“Dominant males displace other males out of their territory as they compete for the female’s attention.”

PWCNT said recently raised river levels have allowed crocodiles to travel more freely and inhabit any part of the river system.

“It is therefore very important to be crocwise. Don’t risk your life.”

One killed, several injured in knife and axe attack in England

LONDON, 2 Jan — One man was killed and a number of people were injured on New Year’s Day in an alleged knife and axe attack in a pub in southwest England, local police said on Thursday.

Police were called to attend the Kings Arms in Tamerton Foliot in Plymouth city of southwest England’s Devon County, following initial reports of a man reported to be in possession of a knife and axe between 1-30 am (GMT) on Thursday.

A 27-year-old man was transported to a local hospital by ambulance but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Police also found one man seriously injured and two men with knife injuries, the Devon and Cornwall Police said.

Police are treating the man’s death as “suspicious.”

A season has been reccorded and two men, aged 20 and 21 both from Plymouth, have been arrested “on suspicion of murder in connection with the incident.”

The suspects are being detained at Charles Cross Police Station in Plymouth.

Police are appealing for witnesses following the major disturbance.

Chinese, Costa Rica’s FM to co-chair 1st China-CELAC ministerial forum

BEIJING, 2 Jan — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Costa Rica’ counterpart Manuel Gonzalez Sanz will co-chair the first China-CELAC ministerial forum, the Foreign Ministry announced on its website on Friday.

The forum, slated for 8-9 January in Beijing, will see representatives from China and CELAC, meeting together with heads of some Latin American regional organizations.

A coordinators’ meeting will be held on 7 January to prepare for the forum.

Costa Rica currently holds the CELAC rotating chairmanship, while Ecuador is next. The two countries, together with Cuba and Bahamas, make up the CELAC Quartet.

Established in December 2011, the CELAC includes all North and South American countries but the United States and Canada.

Big fire in southern Germany leaves 40 injured

BERLIN, 2 Jan — About 40 people were injured on Thursday when a big fire broke out in German city Stuttgart, according to German media Focus.

The incident took place in an underground parking garage of an apartment building on the morning of New Year’s Day.

Dense smoke rose through open doors and spread to other areas of the building, local police told media.

Firefighters have fought against the flames until the early morning hours and rescued more than 90 residents living in the building.

Among those injured, nine people reportedly suffered severe smoke poisoning and have been taken to hospitals. Others have been treated at the site.

According to first investigations, two motorcycles in the garage went up in flames and set cars on fire. A police spokesman said it remained unclear whether the fire was caused by fireworks.

Road accidents kill over 2,100 in Cambodia last year

PHNOM PENH, 2 Jan — Road accidents killed 2,148 people in Cambodia last year, up 13 percent from 1,901 deaths in 2013, according to a National Police annual report on Friday.

“Among the deaths last year were 22 foreigners,” the report said. Besides the fatalities, the accidents injured 8,057 people last year, up 12 percent from 7,208 people in a year earlier, it said, adding that last year’s road crashes caused damage to 2,484 cars, trucks and buses, and 5,056 motorcycles.

Interior Minister Sar Kheng said last month that road traffic crashes cost the country about 337 million US dollars a year.

“High-speed driving and alcohol driving are the main causes of the accidents,” he said during a distribution ceremony of helmets to students in Phnom Penh.

“About 73 percent of the victims are motorists and 58 percent of them did not wear helmets.”

With the population of 14.8 million, the Southeast Asian nation has about 410,000 registered cars, trucks and buses, and two million registered motorcycles.

Four worshipers killed in Rwanda church collapse

KIGALI, 2 Jan — Four people were killed and 24 others injured when a church building collapsed in northern Rwanda’s Burera district on New Year’s Day.

Police said the incident happened around midday local time among prayers at an “unfinished” Adventist Church.

The injured were taken to Ruhengeri Hospital as investigation continues to the cause of the accident.

Police however said the situation was generally calm countrywide as people ushered in the New Year.

The situation has been calm and generally, security has improved during this festive season compared to last year, police said.

“There is an improved sense of responsibility by the merry making public and we encourage people to continue,” police said.

Police said all public events in churches, bars and night clubs were peaceful.
ANNOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE

Roger Chai Yu
Bachelor of Science (Biomedical Engineering) Ph.D. Candidate, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A. eldest son of Dr. Fuxiang Yu & Mrs. Wen Chai of No: 4936, Big Nance Drive, Raleigh, North Cada, U.S.A.

And

Eimon Thet Htn
Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.), Master of Laws (LL.M) International & Comparative Law, Duke University School of Law, Bachelor of Science, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington; grand-daughter of Dr. Aung Than Batu, Director-General (retd), Department of Medical Research, Myanmar; and wife Daw Khin Khin Htwé grand-daughter of (U Tun Myint & Daw Nyunt Tin), formerly of No.48/B, 7½mile, Pyay Road, Yangon; only daughter of (Dr Pyi Thet Htn) & Dr. Thidur Aung of No 7774, Chipwood Lane, Jacksonville, Florida, U.S.A. were married according to Burmese custom and practice, on 20th December, 2014 at Inya Lake Hotel.

A first offering of so by the married couple and various acts of charity were performed at Thathana Beikman, Yodaya Monastery on the morning of 21st December 2014,

and a Wedding Dinner was also held on the same evening at Shankan Restaurant, Inya Road, Yangon.

We are most grateful to our grand-parents/ parents/ uncle & aunt and to Dr Kyaw Zin Thant & Wife Daw Thandar Le, who performed the various rituals of the Wedding Ceremony according to Burmese custom and practice.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the relatives and friends who personally attended the wedding ceremony and offered good wishes and gifts as well as to those who did the same from afar.

We especially thank our cousins/ nephews/ nieces/ and friends who willingly and with cetana participated as bridegrooms, bridesmaids, flower-girl, garland and ring-holders, ushers and helpers to make the wedding a beautiful spectacle and happy occasion.

To the various wedding services and staff who not only carried out their tasks skillfully, but did so with much good will— we are most thankful.

Last but not least, we give our heartfelt thanks to all our relatives and close friends from Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar) and the Universities of Medicine, Yangon, for helping us in various ways to make the Wedding a successful, happy and joyous occasion.

Roger Chai Yu and Eimon Thet Htn

Another EUR 9 million secured to repair flood-damaged homes

BELGRADE, 2 Jan — Director of the Serbian Government Office for Reconstruction and Flood Relief Marko Blagojevic said that the government has so far allocated RSD 4.2 billion for the reconstruction of houses damaged in the May floods and secured another EUR 9 million for the coming year.

The funds to repair damaged homes in 2015 are secured through the European Union programmes for the reconstruction of housing objects severely damaged in the floods, Blagojevic told the New Year’s edition of Belgrade daily Informer.

Financial aid will be available in late January and early February, and it will also be transferred to the areas hit by September floods, such as the eastern Serbian municipality of Kladovo, on the banks of the Danube, he said.

Blagojevic specified that 17,700 families received funds totaling RSD 4.22 billion for the reconstruction of damaged homes, and accommodation has been provided for 292 out of the 337 families whose homes were completely destroyed by the floods.

“This means that they either received money to buy a new house or a new house was built for them,” he explained, adding that the remaining 45 houses under construction are to be completed in January. Most of the new homes are equipped with furniture and home appliances, he added.

The majority of damaged roads have been reopened for traffic, but much is yet to be done to remedy the landslides and repair the damaged banks and infrastructure, said Blagojevic.

“As far as the energy sector is concerned, the work is going well and we expect the coal production in Kohubara to be fully restored in the spring, said the director of the Office for Reconstruction and Flood Relief.

Iran, Turkey to use national currencies in bilateral transactions

TEHRAN, 2 Jan — Iran and Turkey have agreed to use their national currencies in trade transactions, the visiting Turkish economy minister said, Tasnim news agency reported on Thursday. The arrangement, part of a preferential trade agreement concluded after 11 years of negotiations, starts on Thursday, he completed that Zeybekci as saying on Wednesday.

“With implementation of the agreement, we plan to increase the value of our bilateral trade transactions from the current 16 billion US dollars to 30 billion dollars,” said Zeybekci, who met with Iranian Minister of Industries, Mines and Commerce Mohammad-Reza Nematzad. Iran, which boasts the world’s largest natural gas reserves, is Turkey’s second biggest gas supplier after Russia. Turkey uses a significant portion of its imported Iranian natural gas to generate electricity.

Turkey’s main exports to Iran include machinery, motor vehicles, iron and steel products, and tobacco products. Crude oil and natural gas are Iran’s major exports to Turkey.
China’s box office sales surge 36 pct in 2014

BEIJING, 2 Jan — China’s box office sales totaled 29.6 billion yuan (about 4.84 billion US dollars) in 2014, up 36 percent year on year, the country’s film bureau said on Thursday.

Domestic films raked in more than 16.15 billion yuan, accounting for 54.5 percent of last year’s box office revenues in the Chinese mainland, said Zhang Hongsen, head of the film bureau under the administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television.

Facing pressures from Hollywood, China’s films still gained major market share and were welcomed by audiences, he said, citing “The Tak-Tak Tiger Mountain,” “Coming Home” and “Dearest” as outstanding domestic films.

A total of 618 Chinese films were produced in 2014, while 638 were made in 2013.

More people went to see movies in 2014, with viewers taking 830 million trips to the cinema, up 34.5 percent year on year, the administration said.

Earnings of 66 films surpassed the 100-million benchmark last year, including 36 domestic productions. In 2013, 60 films surpassed that figure.

China gained 1,015 cinemas and 5,397 screens last year, bringing the total number of screens to 23,600. “On average, 15 more screens were added each day,” Zhang said.

Chinese films grossed 1.87 billion yuan overseas, up 32 percent, the official said. As the second-largest film market after the United States, China saw its film industry balloon in 2010, when its annual box office sales surpassed 10 billion yuan for the first time. In 2013, it took only six months for ticket sales to reach 10 billion yuan.

Although box office revenues alone cannot fully reflect the state of China’s film industry, attracting larger audiences and increasing domestic market share will help promote the country’s soft power, experts said.

Zhang said Chinese filmmakers should be aware of pressures and challenges and enhance filmmaking quality in 2015.—Xinhua

Angelina Jolie credits War hero Louis Zamperini for teaching spirituality

LOS ANGELES, 2 Jan — Actress-filmmaker Angelina Jolie says she will be thankful to World War II hero Louis Zamperini, who is the inspiration for her film ‘Unbroken’, for teaching her to embrace spirituality.

Zamperini, who died aged 97 earlier this year, became close friends with Jolie, 39, while they worked on the film together, reported People magazine.

“When there is an obstacle, you have to rise to the challenge, not be overwhelmed by it. And we’re not alone in the world.

“I don’t know if there’s a name for that — religion or faith — just that there’s something greater than all of us, and it’s uniting and beautiful,” Jolie said, when asked what she learnt from Zamperini.—PTI

Kanye West wants Idris Elba to play James Bond

LONDON, 2 Jan — American rapper Kanye West has backed Idris Elba to be the next James Bond, calling the British actor a ‘big talent’.

West, 37, said making Elba the first black actor to play the famous spy would be ‘visionary’, reported Independent online.

His comments follow speculation that Elba would be the favourite to take on the role next after a leaked email from Sony Pictures co-chairman Amy Pascal allegedly said that ‘Idris should be the next Bond.’

“James Bond is a role made for British actors and you won’t find a British actor who has the talent of Idris. To be honest you won’t find many anywhere who have his talent… A black Bond would be visionary no doubt,” West said.

West is the latest celebrity to back the Hackney-born actor to play Bond after a minority of commentators said the British spy should not be played by a black actor.

Elba responded to the speculation in a humorous tweet earlier this week.

“Isn’t 007 supposed to be handsome? Glad you think I have got a shot! Happy New Year people,” he wrote.—PTI

Frank Oz returns as Yoda in new ‘Star Wars Rebels’ video

LONDON, 2 Jan — Frank Oz is returning as the voice of Yoda for an upcoming episode of ‘Star Wars Rebels’.—PTI

LOS ANGELES, 2 Jan — Pop star Britney Spears has bought her new boyfriend a horse for his birthday. The 33-year-old singer, who celebrated Christmas with her writer-producer beau Charlie Ebersol and her children last week, splashed out on a dark brown steed for his recent 32nd birthday and also purchased a light brown pony for herself.

The ‘Perfume’ hitmaker shared photographs of them riding their new pets around a stable on Twitter.

“Birthday horses for my birthday boy,” she tweeted.

They also worked to evade the Galactic Empire.

‘Star Wars Rebels’ centres around the adventures of Jedi Knights Kanan Jarrus and Ezra Bridger and the rest of their crew, travelling on a ship called the Ghost, as they work to evade the Galactic Empire.

The episode will air on the Disney Channel in the New Year.—PTI

Brittny Spears buys boyfriend a horse

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The ‘Perfume’ hitmaker shared photographs of them riding their new pets around a stable on Twitter.

“Birthday horses for my birthday boy,” she tweeted.

She also presented him with a huge cake covered in romantic photographs of them together, in addition to images of other couples.—PTI

Nicole Scherzinger forces herself to work out

LONDON, 2 Jan — Pop star Nicole Scherzinger says she forces herself to hit the gym. The 36-year-old singer said getting herself to the gym is getting harder as she gets older, reported Contactmusic.

“I’m like any woman; my weight fluctuates up and down. I have good days and bad days. For me, working out isn’t the only reason she hits the gym.

(Exercising) changes everything about how I approach my day and helps me go about life with confidence. It gives me clarity and makes me feel stronger. It’s not so much for the physical and vanity side of it. I do it more for the emotional and mental strength it gives me.”—PTI

Kanye West and Madonna: Theorist’s Guide to 2015

Los Angeles, 2 Jan — Pop diva Madonna says there is no bad blood between her and fellow singer Lady Gaga. Madonna, 56, took to Instagram to set the record straight after her manager Guy Oseary shot down rumours that the diva dissed Gaga and called her “a copycat” on a leaked song called “Two Steps Behind”.

“There are those who want to shut me up but they cannot! We still live in a world that discriminates against women. (They) are people that are so hateful,” Madonna wrote. She went on accusing media of trying to create feuds that don’t exist. “They want to create feuds between strong women that do not exist! I do not wish ill will towards any other female artist and I never have!” she concluded.

“The world is big enough for all of us! I will fight for my rights as an artist, a human and a woman till the end of my days! Because I am a #rebelheart.”—PTI
Fan arrested for going into Wenger’s dugout

LONDON, 2 Jan — Arsène Wenger played down an incident that led to the arrest of a Southampton fan after his Arsenal side went down 2-0 on the south coast on Thursday.

The Arsenal manager also said the club had received an increased offer from Inter Milan for out-of-favour Germany striker Lukas Podolski.

“The man, arrested on suspicion of going to an area adjacent to the Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger playing area contrary to the Football (Offences) Act 1991, remains in police custody,” the police said in a statement.

Wenger said of the fan: “I don’t think he said anything. It was not aggressive at all”. The Frenchman then went on to describe Inter’s bid to buy Podolski in this month’s transfer window.

“The first proposal was farcical,” said Wenger. “After, when they come back a bit more seriously, then you will see what happens now.”

Asked whether it was inevitable that Podolski would move to Inter, Wenger replied: “Inevitable? In the transfer window that’s very difficult to say but we’ll see what happens”.

Southampton’s victory lifted them to fourth spot in the Premier League table. The Saints have also lifted the FA Cup and were due to play Chelsea in the Capital One Cup final on the south coast on Saturday.

Guangdong slaughters chickens after virus found in export to Hong Kong

GUANGZHOU, 2 Jan — Authorities in Huizhou City in south China’s Guangdong Province said on Friday that it had slaughtered 13,000 chickens on a poultry farm, as its exports to Hong Kong were found to be infected with the deadly H7N9 virus.

Hong Kong authorities said on Wednesday that it would cull 15,000 chickens at the Cheung Sha Wan Market following the latest discovery of the deadly H7N9 virus in poultry imported from Guangdong. Authorities in Huizhou traced the infected birds to the Guangdong Lyufeng Poultry Farm, and culled its stock. An immediate inspection was also made in some 1,000 poultry farms in the city. The virus has not been detected in some 7.68 million samples from the farms.

Hong Kong has raised its response level in hospitals and the region’s stock of life-saving supplies.

Oil tanker collides with Singapore-registered bulk carrier

SINGAPORE, 2 Jan — A Libyan-registered oil tanker collided with a Singapore-registered bulk carrier in Singapore waters about 11 nautical miles north-east of Pedra Branca on Friday morning, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said on Friday.

The collision occurred at about 6 am, with one cargo tank sustained damage, resulting in some spillage of crude oil, the MPA said, adding that it had deployed a helicopter to assess the situation.

Oil spill response resources have been activated, and as part of standard operating procedures for joint oil spill combat in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, the MPA has notified the Malaysian and Indonesian Authorities.

The two vessels involved in the collision are currently safely anchored and in stable condition. No injury has been reported, and traffic in the port and the Strait of Singapore remains unaffected, according to the MPA.

The cause of the collision is now under investigation.

Electricity, gas markets to be liberalised from 1 January

BELGRADE, 2 Jan — A full liberalisation of the electricity market, allowing citizens to choose their suppliers in an open market, will begin from the New Year, with the liberalisation of the gas market set to start as well.

Despite the market liberalisation, small electricity consumers will retain the right to guaranteed supplies from the Serbian electric power company EPS at regulated prices set by the Energy Agency of the Republic of Serbia (AERS).

EPS Director Aleksandar Obradovic has said that he does not expect rival companies to move into Serbia from the European Union, as some analysts believe.

In the first two stages of the liberalisation of the electricity market, around 97 percent of consumers chose to remain with the EPS, with the results of the third stage due to be announced in the current year.

Households and small gas consumers will still have the right to guaranteed supplies, to be provided pursuant to existing contracts.

From 2016, they, too, will be able to choose their suppliers on an open market.

Natural gas distributors in Serbia will also lose the right to guaranteed supplies from January 2015.

Serbia currently has around 260,000 natural gas consumers, 250,000 of whom are households and small consumers.

Under the energy law, small consumers are defined as legal persons and entrepreneurs whose facilities are connected to the distribution system and who have less than 50 employees and profits below EUR 10 million. The new energy law, which took effect on 29 December, retains protection for underprivileged energy consumers, for whom RSD 700,000 million worth of subsidies will be set aside next year as well, with all others to receive a monthly 10-20 kWh of electricity free of charge.

In addition, the monthly gas bills for January, February, March, October, November and December will be reduced by 40-75 cubic metres of gas, depending on the number of household members.

The new, reformist energy law greatly improves the investment climate in the energy sector. — Tanjug

Cuban military salvos 21-cannon salute greeting the coming new year of 2015, in castle Cabana of Havana, Cuba, on 31 Dec, 2014. The ceremony was held on the last night every year in the historic castle, a World Cultural Heritage Site. — Xinhua
City joint top after five-goal Spurs sink Chelsea

London, 2 Jan — Chelsea and Manchester City ended a memorable first day of 2015 locked together at the top of the Premier League as City’s dramatic 3-2 win over Sunderland was followed by a shock 5-3 defeat for Chelsea at Tottenham Hotspur.

Chelsea, previously beaten only once this season, were blown away by their effervescent London rivals with inspired front man Harry Kane scoring twice and setting up two more goals.

To rub in the pain for Chelsea fans it was former hero Frank Lampard who came off the bench to give City their victory after they had thrown away a 2-0 lead for the second time in a week.

When the dust settled on a day of drama that underlined why the Premier League remains the most watched domestic competition in the world, City and Chelsea were on 46 points from 20 games with an identical goal difference of plus-25 having both scored 44 goals.

Manchester United are third on 37 points after a 1-1 draw at Stoke City, Southampton occupy fourth spot on 36 after beating Arsenal 2-0, with Spurs up to fifth on 34, Diego Costa put Chelsea ahead but rampant Spurs surged back with goals by Kane, Danny Rose and an Andros Townsend penalty to lead 3-1 at halftime.

Kane fired his second goal seven minutes after the restart and though Eden Hazard pulled one back, Nacer Chadli completed a joyous day for a hugely impressive Spurs with the fifth goal 12 minutes from time before John Terry got a late third for Chelsea.

The result completed a remarkable change in fortunes for Man City who, after dropping points at home to Burnley on Sunday, again allowed a 2-0 lead to slip in a blizzard of second-half goals.

Yaya Toure and Stevan Jovetic put them 2-0 up before City old boys Jack Rodwell and Adam Johnson, with a penalty, made it 2-2. Lampard then hailed to the rescue, as he has done so often this season, by heading the winner — the fourth goal in a crazy eight-minute spell — three minutes after coming on as a 70-minute substitute.

The league’s bottom two, Leicester City and Burnley, came from behind to draw 2-2 at Liverpool and 3-3 at Newcastle United respectively. There were also draws for two clubs with new managers as Crystal Palace ended 0-0 with Aston Villa and West Bromwich Albion finished 1-1 with West Ham United.

The only winners in the bottom half of the table were Hull City whose 2-0 home success over Everton was a fourth successive defeat for the visitors.

Australia have right blend to win Asian Cup — Jedink

Melbourne, 2 Jan — Australia captain Mile Jedinak is confident the Socceroos have the right blend of players to win this month’s Asian Cup on home soil and that the younger members of the squad are strong enough to handle the pressure.

“I don’t see any reason why not,” the 30-year-old midfielder told reporters in Melbourne on Friday when asked if the less experienced players had the mental fortitude to deliver in front of an expectant home crowd.

“A lot of the boys are going to be excited that it’s going to be on home soil,” the Crystal Palace skipper added.

“We understand that’s going to come with added expectation. Are we capable of handling that? I believe so.”

A week out from the first major football tournament hosted by Australia, Jedinak had his first training session with the Socceroos as they prepare for their opening Group A fixture against Kuwait in Melbourne on 9 January.

South Korea and Oman are the other two teams in the group.

A virtual ever-present under coach Ange Postecoglou, becoming captain prior to the 2014 World Cup, Jedinak said there was nothing stopping the Socceroos from claiming a maiden Asian Cup title.

“I think 100 percent we’ve got the right blend (to win the Cup),” he said.

“We know what’s happened in the last year, in terms of the games and things like that, it’s all been built up towards this point.

“It’s great to be in amongst it and you can see the buzz around the camp, the group.

“The boys are looking to get out there and do the job.”

Australia lost all three matches in a tough assignment in Brazil against Spain, the Netherlands and Chile but Jedink believes that baptism of fire and a tough friendly schedule that followed was a perfect build-up for the Asian Cup.

“It was great having the World Cup so soon before this tournament,” he said. "It got a lot of the squad to see what a tournament environment feels like.

“Everyone’s here to do the job for the national team, that doesn’t change from me to the most inexperienced player.”